

THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."—ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

The National Tribune.

"THE VALIDITY OF THE PUBLIC DEBT OF THE UNITED STATES, AUTHORIZED BY LAW, INCLUDING DEBTS INCURRED FOR PAYMENT OF PENSIONS AND BOUNTIES FOR SERVICES IN SUPPRESSING INSURRECTION OR REBELLION, SHALL NOT BE QUESTIONED."—SEC. 4, ART. XIV, CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH 4, 1882.

How to prevent pension frauds: First find the frauds!

WHERE but the applicants for pensions and the Members of Congress to exchange places for a couple of years what a remarkable revival of patriotism would manifest itself among the latter!

WHEN Gabriel blows his horn it is to be feared the atmospheric concussion will disturb some of the mouldy claims in the Pension Office, unless Congress should suddenly awake to the importance of settling them in this world!

THAT surplus in the Treasury is a source of awful anxiety to some of our Congressmen. It would be so much easier to justify themselves in the eyes of their constituents for opposing the pension appropriations if Uncle Sam were short in his bank account.

BEGINNING with the next number THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE will contain forty-eight instead of forty columns of interesting reading, but there will be no increase in price. Send one dollar and secure a live, vigorous soldier's paper for a whole year.

SOME of our extremely conservative Congressmen seem disposed to make a joint celebration of the completion of Washington's Monument and the adjustment of the accumulated claims in the Pension Office. The precise date will be left to posterity to fix.

WHERE are the unfortunate wretches who, according to the revenue reformers, are being "ground down with oppressive Federal taxes?" We should like to print a specimen portrait of one of these alleged living skeletons. Vanderbilt, Gould, Astor, Field, Rockefeller—any of these tax-ridden citizens will do!

WE surrender a considerable portion of our space this week to the publication of the most interesting portions of Mr. Blaine's memorial oration on the death of President Garfield. It is a profoundly eloquent tribute to the memory of the dead soldier and statesman from one who loved him well.

PATIENCE on a monument would be an appropriate embellishment for the proposed new Pension Bureau building. But, by the way, wouldn't it be just as well to devote the money which the ground and building would cost to the sorely needed increase in the clerical force of the Bureau?

THE newspapers which lately were so blatant in their attacks upon the soldier and were ready to denounce every applicant for a pension as a swindler, seem to have lost the power of speech; or is their silence owing simply to the circumstance that they haven't been able to manufacture any new slanders? Even Senator Beck has not "conceived in iniquity" lately.

SUPPOSE the Post-Office Department were ten years behind in the payment of claims for the lack of sufficient clerical force to transact the business of the office—but it is impossible to conceive of such a thing. If Congress refused to appropriate the necessary money for an increase of force, it would have a full-blown rebellion on its hands before the mails had been stopped twenty-four hours. The Pension Bureau is the only Department where the Government can do as it pleases about paying its debts. Applicants for pensions are to consider themselves fortunate if their claims are ever settled.

Our New Departure.

THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE will appear next week in an enlarged form, and will be printed for the first time from stereotype plates by our new Scott Rotary Web Printing and Folding Machine, which will deliver 10,000 papers, already cut, pasted, and folded, per hour. With mechanical facilities equal to those of the great dailies, new and beautiful type, and a staff of experienced and versatile writers, THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE will enter upon a new and, as we hope, a still more prosperous and useful career. Arrangements have been made for the publication of a series of brilliant military papers, the first of which will be contributed by General Rosecrans, and will appear in our next number, and among other new attractions will be a valuable article on the Grand Army organization by its own Commander, General Merrill. The interests of the soldier in Congress will be more zealously guarded than ever in its columns, the important news of the week will be presented in the most interesting form, and the literary features which have made it such a welcome fireside companion will be made still more entertaining.

Published as it is at the Capital of the Nation, it enjoys unrivaled opportunities for watching the course of legislation and supplying its readers with the earliest information concerning new and important developments in national affairs, while its extensive correspondence with ex-soldiers in every State and Territory enables it to reflect with unerring judgment the real sentiment of the Nation.

It is unnecessary, we are sure, to dwell upon the work which THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE has accomplished during the comparatively brief period that it has been in existence; it speaks for itself, yet it is but earnest of the work which yet remains to be done. There has seldom been a time, within the history of pension legislation, when the aid of a fearless and able public journal like THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE was so imperatively needed to defeat the attempts that are continually being made in Congress to nullify or repeal the pension acts, and to reinforce the efforts that at this moment are being put forth in that body for the passage of new pension measures. This journal rendered a great service to the public when it compelled the retirement of Commissioner Bentley, but the reform which it then instituted will never be completed until Congress has authorized such an increase in the clerical force of the Pension Bureau and Surgeon-General and Adjutant-General's Offices as will insure the speedy adjustment of every one of the two hundred and sixty odd thousand claims that are now on file there. THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE will not slacken its fire until that object has been accomplished. In the future, as in the past, it will devote all its energies to the cause of the Nation's defenders, and "with malice toward none and charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right," it will strive to finish the work it is in. From the public it asks nothing but that recognition which should ever be extended to the faithful representative of the people's interests. If they would see the soldier protected in all his rights, the debt which this Government still owes him honorably discharged, and the spirit of patriotism perpetuated in the generation that has grown up since the war, let them rally to its support and record their names upon its fast-increasing subscription roll. If they will but lend their aid, the circulation of THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE will soon reach one hundred thousand copies, and its influence will be proportionately enlarged and strengthened.

Why Delay?

From July 1, 1861, to January 1, 1882, the Pension Bureau allowed 454,363 claims and rejected 73,001, making a total of 527,364 adjudicated. There are now on the files of the office 266,383 unsettled claims, and it is becoming every day more important, for reasons which will presently appear, to secure speedy action upon them. The rate at which they are being disposed of at present is painfully slow. The monthly average for the last four months of 1881, as shown by Commissioner Dudley's reports, was but 4,629 cases, equal to a yearly reduction of only 55,548 cases, although that is a much higher ratio than was achieved by Commissioner Bentley. From this apparent reduction, too, must be subtracted the number of new claims filed, which now averages 2,500 monthly, or 30,000 per year, leaving the actual annual reduction but 25,548 cases, at which rate it would take at least ten years to dispose of all the vast accumulated business of the Pension Office, and five years to reach the last of the claims that are now on file.

Why?

Simply because Congress refuses to authorize the employment of a sufficient force in the Pension Bureau to transact the business of the office.

When the present Commissioner went into office, the force aggregated 784 persons, but, owing to the lack of funds, he was almost immediately compelled to discharge more than a hundred clerks, reducing the number to about 675, at which it still remains. As the President stated in his message, "fully one-third of the clerical force is now wholly occupied in giving attention to correspondence with the thousands of claimants whose cases have been on the files for the past eighteen years," which is in itself a serious source of weakness.

All these facts were fully set forth to the Lower House of Congress by Representative Browne, of Indiana, in the course of the able speech which

he delivered on the 18th inst., in support of an amendment to the immediate-deficiency bill to appropriate \$173,900 for the payment of the clerical force in the Pension Office for the remainder of the present fiscal year, so that members of that body cannot plead ignorance hereafter as an excuse for not voting the money that is needed by the Bureau.

It will take ten years, as we have shown, to adjudicate all the claims now pending and that will be filed in the interim unless the clerical force in the Pension Office be increased. Is it just that any of the claimants, many of whom have already waited for years and are now in actual distress, should be put off another decade? No better answer to that question could be desired than is contained in the following passage from the speech of Mr. Browne, already referred to. Said he:

"It is nearly seventeen years now since the last gun was fired, since the last man incurred a disability in battle, or on the march, or in hospital, and it is high time the books were closed. We all know how the account stands. If pensions are due the gallant men who fought in our armies, or to their widows or dependent children, they should be paid, and a patriotic people will not hesitate to pay them. These claims should be paid to the last penny, and paid without delay. The system of payment should secure equal justice to both claimant and the Government. It should be a system securing the most expedition possible compatible with the safety of the people. As the years pass by witnesses, important alike to the claimant and the Government, are disappearing forever. A few years more of delay and it will be impossible to ascertain the exact truth in any case, and then either the claimant or the Government must suffer. To delay this business much longer will result in a practical repudiation of this sacred debt. Why delay?"

Why delay indeed! Of all the Departments of the Government the Pension Bureau alone is denied the necessary clerical force to dispatch its business as rapidly as it comes before it, and of all the Government's creditors the soldier is the only one who cannot collect what is due him! Think what a monstrous thing it is that 266,383 claimants whose rights are blood-bought should be kept shivering for years on the steps of the Treasury while the sleek bondholder, whose rights are but those of an ordinary money-lender, should be promptly paid off!

In answer to all this what have the time-servers in Congress to say? Absolutely nothing, except that the Government can't afford the increased expense which an enlargement of the Pension Office force would entail, as if by their own admission the surplus revenues of the Treasury were not \$150,000,000 per year! No such scruples of economy interfered with the passage of the appropriation bills for the Census Office deficiency, nor has the business of any other Department ever been permitted to get so seriously in arrears as that of the Pension Office, yet prompt payment of our debts to the Nation's defenders is surely as important as the settlement of any other obligation. It is time that our veterans resorted to concerted action to compel Congress to do its duty in this matter. Let them appeal by letter and in person to their Representatives to protect their rights and save the country from dishonor!

Let the Revenues Alone.

A concerted movement is being made in the present Congress to effect a reduction in the internal revenue taxes. Some of our Representatives appear to be actuated by the belief that there is a great popular demand for the reduction, and they hope to make political capital by it. Others favor the reduction because they want to wipe out the annual surplus in the Treasury, and so prevent, as they hope, any increase in the pension appropriations. There is also some reason for believing that the High-Tariff men are willing to vote for it in order to head off the attempt to reduce the duties on foreign imports. Selfish consideration of one kind or another are the mainspring of the movement. It is not supported, so far as we have yet seen, by either fact or reason.

What necessity exists at the present moment for a reduction of internal revenue taxation? The country was never so well able to pay the taxes, and there has never been a time when the surplus revenues of the Government could be spent to better advantage. No one, we presume, will deny that our prosperity is due in great measure to the superb condition of the national credit. Shall we then, in the flood-tide of that prosperity, stop paying the public debt? Is it wise, when the Nation is content to pay the taxes, even temporarily to remove it; and, should that step be taken, will it not strengthen the influence of those who are opposed to ever paying the debt?

No one, we presume, will deny that our prosperity is due, in still larger measure, to the brave men who risked their lives to preserve the Union. Shall we, then, at a time when the wealth of the country is increasing at a prodigious rate, cease to recompense them for their sacrifices? Is it sound policy to set such a precedent, when, at any time in the future, we may again have need of their services?

Who, furthermore, will profit by reduction? First and foremost, the liquor interest. It is the distillers who pay the bulk of the internal revenue taxes, and it was with them that the clamor for a reduction originated. Upon what ground, pray, should it be granted? If there is any traffic that ought to be dearly taxed, it is certainly this, which profits by the degradation and

ruin of mankind. Cheap whisky will only multiply drunkards and augment suffering, poverty, and crime throughout the land. We do not believe that the people want cheap whisky, or that it can be justified on any theory of statesmanship. And, as a matter of fact, does anybody believe that the consumer would profit by the reduction?

The tobacco manufacturers are also shouting for a reduction. Let them shout! It is a disputed question, whether whisky or tobacco has the most victims, but however that may be, it is clear that tobacco is a mere luxury of life, and is a fit article for heavy taxation. Tobacco is already so cheap that Young America is now seen strutting about with a cigarette in his mouth before he is out of frocks. Is anybody willing to recommend it as a food for babies? Tobacco is doing enough injury to health already without increasing its opportunities for evil. No; cheap tobacco is not one of the country's needs.

There is the stamp tax, too. Who has been ruined by that impost? If any bank president has been bankrupted, we have not heard of it, although the physical exertion involved in sticking a stamp on such checks as Vanderbilt is in the habit of drawing is doubtless a great strain upon the nervous systems of capitalists.

It is also a great hardship, perhaps, to compel the manufacturers of patent medicines to stamp each package or bottle, but we suspect that even were this burden removed the thousands of persons whose lives are saved yearly by these miraculous remedies would have to pay as much as ever for them.

Upon the whole, it seems to us, that the best thing Congress can do is to let the revenues alone. The people are not overtaxed, and do not complain, and besides, the Government has immediate need of all the surplus revenue it can command. It is time that we had a new navy of some sort or other, and the recent devastating floods in the Western rivers admonish us that we must spend some money on the improvement of the Mississippi, while it goes without saying that our ex-soldiers and sailors should be paid every penny that is owing them in the shape of pensions or bounties. It will be time enough to cut down the revenues when, through hard times or other causes, the taxes become too heavy a burden for the people to bear, or the Government has no longer any need of a large income. Let the revenues and well-enough alone!

The Grand Army Encampment.

The Annual Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, as our readers are doubtless all aware, will be held in Baltimore this year. It is the first time that a Southern city has been selected for a Reunion, but Baltimore is now really a Southern city in name only. Northern and Western men have settled there in large numbers since the war, and the old Union element which stood so gallantly by the flag in the perilous days of '61 is now strong and vigorous. The local Posts too, are in a flourishing condition, and the citizens are proud of the fine display which they make when they parade through the streets on Decoration Day and other holiday occasions. If we may judge from the tone of the local press an effort will be made by some of the trade bodies of the city to give the veterans a public welcome and provide for their entertainment in the most generous manner. The old notion that the Grand Army is a political machine seems to be disappearing even in Maryland, and doubtless the reception of the Boys in Blue in Baltimore will be as enthusiastic as elsewhere.

What a Grand Army it is in fact as well as name! Think by what precious memories of heroic and chivalric deeds its members are bound together, with what glorious achievements their names have been connected, and in what dangers, sufferings, and privations their brotherhood has been cemented! How it stirs the pulses and loosens the reins of the imagination to see the Blue Line advancing down the streets, bands playing, colors flying, the people cheering just as they did full twenty years ago! There is the same martial bearing and the same steady, swinging step, albeit here and there one can see that age has stiffened the joints of the veterans. Away with your militia and their fine new uniforms! Your holiday soldiers are pretty to look at, but here comes the Old Guard that fought at Bull Run and Fredericksburg, at Vicksburg and Pittsburg Landing, at Chancellorsville and Antietam, that led that splendid charge at Gettysburg and fired the last gun at Appomattox! One fancies he scents the fumes of gunpowder and hears the roar of distant cannonading, as the veterans file by.

But their campaigns are over. The brave soldier has become the good citizen. Science, art, commerce, every trade and industry now claim that devotion which, when the Republic had need of it, was the Republic's alone. Peace hath her victories as well as war, and in the great struggle for existence—in the camp of labor, the field of discovery, and the march of mind—the Grand Army is still fighting the battles of mankind.

THE picture which the distillers draw of their sufferings under the present tax is indescribably touching. They actually have been compelled to give their liquor an extra watering in order to get even!

SUBSCRIBE FOR THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE and help to drive another nail in the coffin of national ingratitude.

Justice to the Pensioner.

The following extract from a speech delivered by Congressman Browne, of Indiana, in the House on the 18th ultimo contains the very essence of the principle involved in the Arrears of Pensions Act, and as an argument in justification of that measure is absolutely unanswerable:

"Mr. Chairman, when I began it was not my intention to discuss the Arrears Act, but as that act has been vigorously assailed and its repeal demanded, I may say a word upon this subject, I hope, without trespassing too much upon the indulgence of the House. By our law, and by the laws of every civilized nation in the world, a soldier who is disabled in the line of duty is entitled to a pension. That pension is due the moment the Government declares by the soldier's discharge that the disability unfits him from further service, provided the injury continues and impairs his ability to labor. The pension is the sum the Government pays to make the man each month equal in his ability to labor to what he would have been had the disability not been incurred. On the very day the injury drives him from the Government's employ his right to demand a pension exists, and if it were possible to perfect his proofs then his pay would begin at once. Should his failure to make application at once, or his inability to collect his evidence, or the procrastination of the Pension Office in examining his claim, defeat his just demand? Does not the damage begin to run from the very day the injury deprived him of his ability to earn full pay?"

"Suppose two soldiers receive similar wounds in the same engagement; one files his claim immediately, his pension is allowed and is paid him regularly ten years before the other makes his application. Now, what element exists in the one case that is wanting in the other? Why should these two pensions not begin at the same time? Is it just that one of these gallant men should have ten years' more pay for exactly the same disability than the other? It was to give equal merit equal pay that the Arrears Act was passed. It was enacted to do justice to all, to make all pensions cover, as they should, the whole period of disability."

WE HAVE received several communications relative to the case of the so-called General Rial Niles, and in reply to all say that the matter was duly investigated by the G. A. R. of Philadelphia and the General? proved a fraud.

HAVE the two hundred and sixty odd thousand claimants whose applications for a pension are on file in the Pension Bureau no rights which the American Congress is bound to respect? There seems to be an impression at the Capitol that it would be a magnificent stroke of economy to postpone payment until the crack of doom, but a little daylight will be let into that crack before long.

WITH all the talk in Congress about pension frauds, it doesn't seem to have occurred to the alarmists that the soldier who swears falsely concerning his claim is liable to punishment for perjury, while the miserable wretch who testifies falsely against him is liable to no punishment at all under existing law. Would it not be well to prevent frauds on the soldier as well as the Government?

IT is proposed to spend ten millions of dollars in laying the keel of a new navy. A new navy is certainly sadly needed, since our sailors are at present forced to go to sea in tubs, but rather to protect the lives of those who navigate the existing hulks of the line than to repel a foreign foe. If Congress can afford to spend any money for this purpose, it can certainly afford to pay for the increased clerical force in the Pension Bureau, which is needed to adjust the accumulated claims within a reasonable period.

SUBSCRIBE FOR THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE and learn what is going on in the world.

WHAT IS GOING ON ABROAD.

Much interest is manifested abroad in the nihilist trials which are now progressing at St. Petersburg. The prosecution has been conducted with great vigor, and the prisoners have been treated with the utmost severity, no communication being permitted between them, and almost no opportunity being afforded for consultation with their counsel. The majority of the twenty-one will, doubtless, be convicted and sentenced to death. The discovery of an infernal machine at the Berlin depot of the Saxon railway has caused disquietude at the German capital. It was wound up to explode in twelve hours, and the explosion set fire to the depot. Mr. Bradlaugh, who was expelled from the House of Commons on the 22d ult. for contempt, will again contest the seat for Northampton, where a new election has been ordered by Parliament. General Skobelev's speech continues to excite alarm through Europe, and the feeling of insecurity has been increased by the declaration of the Moscow Telegraph that the General only expressed the opinion of millions of Russians. Lieutenant Harter and Master Schenck, of the U. S. Navy, have left St. Petersburg for Irkutsk, whence they will prosecute the search for the Jeannette's third boat. Lieutenant Danenhower returns to St. Petersburg. The appointment of M. Roustan as Minister to the United States from France, has been gazetted at Paris. The British Commission to inquire into the working of the land act, according to Lord Salisbury's declaration in Parliament, will labor in the direction of redressing the wrongs of landlords. The present commercial treaty between France and England has been prolonged until May 15th. Austria has undertaken an offensive movement against the insurgents in Herzegovina. The International Electrical Exhibition at Edinburgh was opened on Saturday evening by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. One hundred and fifty lives have been lost by a colliery explosion at Leoben, Styria. Mr. Gladstone seems disposed to press the issue between the Commons and the Lords touching the committee which the latter body has constituted to inquire into the working of the land act. A conference of Liberals was held at his house on Monday, and the same day the Commons by a vote of 300 to 167 took up his resolution pronouncing the inquiry injudicious. It is rumored that the Czar of Russia will abdicate after his coronation if the Empire does not improve, but no faith is placed in the report.

The officers and soldiers of the Army of the Cumberland who composed the guard of honor to the remains of President Garfield during the funeral obsequies, by invitation of the committee officiated as ushers on the occasion of the memorial services at the Capitol on the 27th.